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HENRY GRATTAN.

HENRY GRATTAN:

A HISTORICAL STUDY.

BY

JOHN GEORGE MAC CARTHY, M. P.



DUBLIN:

E. PONSONBY, 116, GRAFTON-STREET.

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CONTENTS.



	PAGE.
INTRODUCTION,	I
CHAPTER I.	
GRATTAN'S EARLY LIFE [1746 TO 1775],	5
CHAPTER II.	
HIS STRUGGLE FOR COMMERCIAL FREEDOM AND NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE [1775 TO 1782],	20
CHAPTER III.	
HIS STRUGGLE FOR CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION AND PAR- LIAMENTARY REFORM [1782 TO 1797],	39
CHAPTER IV.	
HIS STRUGGLE AGAINST THE UNION [1800],	65
CHAPTER V.	
HIS LAST YEARS AND DEATH [1800 TO 1820],	76

THE following pages have been published at the suggestion of some members of the Grattan Monument Committee, in the hope of promoting and popularizing knowledge of the subject.

RIVER VIEW, CORK,
January 1, 1876.

HENRY GRATTAN.



INTRODUCTION.

INTELLIGENT Irishmen of every creed and class honour Grattan. Irish Protestants honour him as the greatest of Irish Protestant statesmen. Irish Catholics honour him as one of the earliest, boldest, and most successful advocates of Irish Catholic rights. Friends of order know that order had never a stauncher ally. Friends of liberty know that liberty had never a stouter asserter. Those who like the British connexion are aware that he was its steadfast supporter. Those who love Irish independence know that he was the only Irishman who ever actually achieved it. We are all more or less proud of a man whose genius

shed lustre on our common country, and, however we may doubt about the present, or differ amongst ourselves, we all feel within us a chord that vibrates sympathetically to the name of him who helped to win some of the greatest liberties we actually enjoy, and who, for a brief period, gave Ireland a place amongst the nations.

Nevertheless, little is specifically known about him. When I came to review my own stock of knowledge on the subject, I found it to be meagre. I could have made a speech about Grattan any time these twenty years. Most Irishmen can make a speech on any subject whatever. But I had no clear portrait of the man in my mind's eye. I found it to be the same way with other people. They could talk fluently about Grattan; but they really did not *know* much about him. Turning to literature I found the case not much better. We have an admirable paper about him in Mr. Lecky's "Leaders of Public Opinion:" but it is rather an essay than a portrait. We have a solid and masterly argument in Mr. O'Neill Daunt's lecture; but it does not aim at personal or

biographical delineation. In order to find out for myself the manner of man Grattan actually was, to get a clear conception of his individuality, to judge whether he was honest or a humbug, to know what he aimed at, what he failed in, what he succeeded in, what were his virtues, what were his foibles, what were his faults, how he looked, spoke, and worked, what was his private life, and what, on the whole, was the true tenor of the man's existence in this world, I had to ransack, and get ransacked, the dustiest shelves of a dozen libraries in Cork, Dublin, and London, to read scores of books long since out of print, and to seek traces of him through all sorts of old memoirs, magazines, newspapers, and parliamentary reports. I now respectfully submit the result of this investigation.

But I must ask my readers' forbearance. The subject is what is called a "touchy" one. How shall I deal with it? Shall I try to please everybody? Shall I cut, and trim, and hedge? Shall I tell only what I suppose my readers would like to hear? Must I think of them rather than of Grattan? Of course not. History loses all value if so dealt with; and it is

history we are dealing with, not present or party politics. The times of which we are to think have passed for nearly a hundred years. Of all the busy brains and hearts throbbing then within the four seas of Ireland, I suppose that not one throbs now. Let us then look back on those times with historic calmness. Let us forget ourselves for an hour. Let us hush the clamorous present. Let us try to make "the dead past" live again. Let us seek truth, not ammunition for party warfare. Thus shall History give us its lesson, and thus, I trust, shall we obtain distinct ideas of the chief events in the life, and the chief lineaments in the character of HENRY GRATTAN.

CHAPTER I.

HIS EARLY LIFE.

[1746 TO 1775].

THE date of Grattan's birth is the 3rd of July, 1746. The place of his birth was his father's mansion of Belcamp, in Dublin. His father's family were good old civic people, honest traders, stout Protestants, hot haters of Papists. One of them had been senior fellow of Dublin University. Another had been Lord Mayor of Dublin. They must have been people of some culture, for the Sheridans were their friends, and Dean Swift had been an intimate at their house. The father of Henry Grattan was a barrister of good character and good practice, handsome, honest, and kindly, but a bad speaker, impatient of contradiction, violent in temper, and narrow-minded in political

views; one of those toriest of Tories who believe themselves Liberals. He was at this time Recorder of Dublin. Henry Grattan's mother came of a Norman stock, the De Merlys, or, as they came to be called, Marlays. Her ancestor, Sir John Marlay, was a distinguished Royalist officer in the Cromwellian wars. Her father, Chief Justice Marlay, was a friend of the famous Lord Chesterfield when the latter was here as Lord Lieutenant; and Mary Marlay had been a belle in Chesterfield's brilliant court before she married Recorder Grattan. She was a woman of spirit, culture, and accomplishments.

In childhood Grattan was sickly. Nevertheless, in due time he was sent to day-schools in Ship-street and Abbey-street, where he was duly, or as he himself considered, unduly threshed. The first notable thing told about him was the way he got over his fear of ghosts. Some nursery stories had made the lad nervous on such subjects. But he knew that his apprehensions were absurd, and he took a bold way to conquer them. He was missed from his home at midnight. He was discovered seated alone

on a tombstone in a graveyard. "What on earth are you doing there, sir?" shouted his choleric father. "Only learning not to be afraid of ghosts, papa," quietly answered the boy. I hope he did not get threshed for that. It was a significant circumstance—presage of the pluck that faced and conquered many a "bogy" in after days.

In his seventeenth year, Henry Grattan was sent to Trinity College. Most universities of that time were wild places enough: but it must be confessed that in few could be found a wilder set than in "Old Trinity" during Grattan's college days. The pranks of this set were the talk of the town, and are the subject of many memoirs. They drank, swore, fought duels, nailed the ears of yelling bailiffs to the College pump, had pitched battles in the streets with the Ormond-quay butchers, and, under the name of "Pinkindindies," swaggered about in all places of resort, pricking or "pinking" with their swords, from the points of which the scabbards had been cut, any one of whom they were not very much afraid. One must not be too strait-laced in telling of the sports of boys. Allowance

must be made for the wild ways of the time. More than one of these swaggering scapegraces became distinguished men. In one of their sprees Oliver Goldsmith got knocked down near where his statue now stands; and even the grave and lofty Flood at another time joined their pranks. But Goldsmith's fault was only a frolic; Flood's aberration was brief; and the plain truth remains that, with few exceptions, these "Bucks" and "Pinkindies" were nuisances—graceless scamps who never did any good for themselves or their country. It is a fact to be remembered about Grattan, that from first to last he kept clear of them and their ways.

"Old Trinity" had a better set than this: a set of hard students, sober-living and honest gentlemen; young fellows with the "*vis viva animi*" of intellectual prowess: men who afterwards became famous in Church, Bar, and Senate. With this nobler set Grattan allied himself. Of it he became in his time the chief. He evinced talent, industry, ambition, and self-respect. He took high collegiate honours. We now discern the first note of his oratorical ten-

dency in his devoted study of the great orators of antiquity. It is fair to add that in these college contests Grattan's chief competitor was a handsome, but dark and sullen youth, known as "Black Jack Fitzgibbon;" known afterwards as Lord Chancellor Clare.

Grattan's collegiate triumphs, and indeed all his early years, were shadowed by one trouble. Of affectionate nature, intensely fond of his choleric and dictatorial old father, he completely differed from him in political views. It was just at the time when the dormant intellect of the country had been thoroughly awakened by the trumpet-note of Flood's eloquence. Nearly all generous hearts had begun to throb with the thought of retrieving the fortunes of Ireland, and achieving the national autonomy. This was already fast becoming the master-thought of young Grattan's life. In Dublin, it was the talk of all circles, the test-question of all political contention. The Reformers were led by vehement, coarse old Dr. Lucas, member for Dublin, founder of the "Freeman's Journal," friend of Flood, friend of Dr. Johnson, fearless advocate of national

liberty. The leader of Dr. Lucas' opponents was—Recorder Grattan, now also member for Dublin. The two vehement old men thundered at each other from all platforms, all Dublin taking sides with one or other. Whose side was young Grattan to take? His love was with his father: his principles were with Lucas. It was a hard problem. The young fellow solved it reasonably enough. He did not openly oppose his father; but he did not conceal his political sympathies. Vehement old Mr. Grattan, however, would "stand no nonsense" of this kind. He was one of those lovers of liberty who are so fond of it that they must have it all to themselves; one of these autocrats of the dinner-table who, at their own board, allow none but their own opinions. He insisted on a conformity which his son's self-respect could not yield. Thus came about estrangement, trouble to both men, and young Grattan's virtual exclusion from his father's hospitable and well-frequented board.

Two other houses, however, were open to him: those of his uncles, Dean Marlay and Colonel Marlay. The Dean sat, not without grace, in the chair of Swift. He had not Swift's

genius, but he had Swift's love of learning and love of liberty: like Swift, he was a scholar and a wit; and he had the bright and easy temper that Swift lacked. In after days, sitting with the Peers as Bishop, he did stout battle for his country's freedom. At this time (as Rogers the Poet tells us) "Dean Marlay gave the nicest little dinners and kept the best company in Dublin."¹ His house was the favourite resort of Flood, Charlemont, Denis Daly, Barry Yelverton, Hussey Burgh, and other leaders of national opinion. It was there Henry Grattan first met these men. They recognised the talents of the pale, shy collegian: they little dreamed he was to be their leader in many a day of glory and of peril.

The first who really did recognise Grattan's capabilities was his uncle Colonel Marlay, of Marlay Abbey, near Dublin: a shrewd, kindly, gallant old man, who had fought well in German wars and knew much of men in many Courts and Camps. He soon saw, as he said, the stuff of which the lad was made, and he "swore" by him from the first. I am afraid he very literally

¹ "Table Talk," p. 178.

“swore” by him. To find any fault with Henry was to arouse Colonel Marlay’s wrath, if not to bring his fingers near the sword with which Prince Ferdinand had presented him in the field of Minden. Throughout all the vicissitudes of Grattan’s career, brave old “Uncle Tom” was his staunch backer: backing him unstintingly with money, influence, counsel, confidence, sympathy: backing him in the Volunteer time with military skill: ready to back him with Prince Ferdinand’s sword “in any good cause at all.” Grattan spent much of his earlier time in the Colonel’s pleasant home on the banks of the Liffey, the very place, as it happened, where Swift had written the “Drapier’s letters,” and where he and Vanessa had strangely, if blamelessly, loved and studied.

Grattan’s University course ended, he prepared to go to the Bar. The chief evidence then required of fitness to practise as an Irish Barrister was the proof that a certain number of bad dinners had been eaten in a London tavern. Partly on this account Grattan resided for the greater part of the next five years in London. He had introductions to the “best people”

there, and was welcome to the house of the Prime Minister, Lord Shelbourne. He availed of such opportunities sufficiently to make himself acquainted with Lord Chatham, Edmund Burke, Fox, Wilkes, and the most notable Englishmen of the day. But he kept clear of London dissipations and lived for the most part a retired life at Sunning Hill, near Windsor Forest—a romantic spot which Pope had celebrated in verses then well known. His “chum” was Robert Day, a clever Kerryman, then a law-student, afterwards a judge. Grattan did not read much law: soon finding it and its profession uncongenial. He followed freely his natural bent to oratory. His favourite resorts were the gallery of the House of Commons and the bar of the House of Lords. Night after night he listened; returning home, not to rest, but to wander through the Forest, revolving and de-claiming what he had heard. Day after day he transcribed and recited passages from Chatham, Bolingbroke, Burke, and the great orators of antiquity. His landlady thought he was mad. What else would make a gentleman wander about at night talking to himself, and sometimes

getting into awful passions with an imaginary companion whom he called "Mr. Speaker?" She once piteously asked his friends to take him home, and offered, if they did so, to forgive the rent. On another occasion, wandering by moonlight in Windsor Forest, he happened to come across a gallows. His poetical and oratorical faculties were aroused by the incident, and he addressed to it a brilliant apostrophe. In the midst of this, a hand touched him on the shoulder. His old fear of ghosts must have returned, for Grattan jumped a yard high. But the stranger was as much frightened as himself. Trembling all over, glancing alternately from the gallows to the orator, he said: "How the D—l did you get down?"

In January, 1772, Grattan was called to the Bar. But he continued to dislike it, and he soon gave it up. "I am now," he wrote at this time, "a Barrister, but without knowledge or ambition in my profession. The Four Courts are, of all places, the most disagreeable to me." He lost his first case, and returned the fee.

The next three years were the least worthy, and the least happy, of Grattan's life. He had

failed at the Bar : he had not succeeded in anything else. The cause of Ireland seemed hopeless, and Grattan was amongst those who deemed it so. His father, whom he had never ceased to love, had died in mortal feud with him : bequeathing away from him all the family property, except some three hundred a-year over which he had not bequeathing power. His mother, whom he also tenderly loved, had died. His favourite sister had died. The lady to whom he was affianced died. His own health was so bad that he believed himself dying. He wished himself dead. The clouds of a great sorrow closed over him. He lost heart and hope, gave up study and society, and wrote to his friends a series of the most lugubrious letters I have ever read. But these letters show the real cause of his morbid depression : Grattan had become an infidel. This was the age of Bayle, Rousseau, and Voltaire. Their thoughts were in all minds : their words on all lips. The brilliant Bolingbroke had revived in England the refined infidelity of classic times, and Pope had made its false philosophy the key-note of his greatest poem.

It was hard to escape such influences. For a while, Grattan yielded to them. We derive this information from confidential letters written by him to two of his most intimate friends. I doubt his son's wisdom in publishing these letters. But there they are, not to be blinked; and their confidential character renders them only the more plainly indicative of his real mind. "I have become," Grattan expressly wrote in one of them, "an epicurean philosopher. I consider this world our *ne plus ultra*, and happiness our greatest object in it."¹ Not to speak of the folly of it, one could not do a drearier thing than become an "epicurean philosopher." As in common life, those who are always seeking their own comfort are generally the most comfortless of mortals, so in philosophy, the pursuit of one's own happiness drives men to the verge of despair. Sometimes *over* the verge — to madness or suicide. Given a sensitive, noble soul, like Grattan's, what drearier creed could man or devil preach than that this hard, mean, fussy world is all: that our business in it is to try

¹ "Life," vol. I., p. 115.

to be "happy" for a few days before we die; that truth, love, justice, eternity, God, are dreams; that there is "no golden goal in the distance dim" to brighten the paths of common life? Not to madness only, or to suicide only, do such doctrines lead, but to worse—to the meanest and most reckless licentiousness. They led Grattan to sorrow; they embittered the best days of his life; they impressed his character, his features, and his very voice, with a sadness that never wholly left them; but they did not lead him to dissipation. In an age of licentiousness, his private life was without a stain. As "Uncle Tom" had said, there was stuff in the lad. After a while his better nature asserted itself. He shook off this ignoble nightmare. As he recovered his faith in God and man, he recovered the elasticity of his spirit, the resources of his splendid faculties, the heroic hope of his youth—to do and dare something for Ireland. He resumed his political and oratorical studies. He returned to society, and became the friend of some of the best men in both countries. In England, Rogers the poet became his chief companion,

and conceived an enthusiastic, life-long love for him. Rogers introduces his Irish friend by name in his noblest poem (that on Human Life), and thus addresses him :

“ A walk in Spring, Grattan, like those with thee
By the heath-side, who had not envied me ?
When the sweet limes, so full of bees in June,
Led us to meet beneath their boughs at noon :
And thou did'st say, which of the great and wise,
Could they but hear and at thy bidding rise,
Thou would'st call up and question ?”¹

In Ireland he made a more important friendship. At this time Ireland was full of the fame of Flood. Flood's residence was in the County Kilkenny, and Grattan's sister had married in that neighbourhood. The two men were thrown much together. They played in the private theatricals that were the fashion of the day ; Grattan writing brilliant prologues for the reigning belles of that gay and graceful Kilkenny society. They published a series of witty political sketches under the name of “ Baratariana.” They formed a club in Dublin

¹ “ Human Life,” p. 12.

known as "The Society of Granby Row," where the chiefs of the popular party met during the Parliamentary session. They walked in the groves of Swift and Vanessa at Marlay Abbey. When opportunity offered, Flood insisted on Grattan entering Parliament. Thus it happened that some of the best men and women in both countries rejoiced when, in the month of December, 1775, Grattan, then in the thirtieth year of his age, became member of the Irish Parliament for the borough of Charlemont.

CHAPTER II.

HIS STRUGGLE FOR COMMERCIAL FREEDOM, AND NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE.

[1775 TO 1782.]

THE first great Parliamentary work to which Grattan applied himself, was the removal of the restrictions on Irish trade. To understand the importance of this work we must look back a little.

In early times Ireland had considerable commerce and manufactures. Before a loom stirred in Lancashire, Irish linens and woollens were known in European markets. Before a ship sailed from the Mersey, Irish merchants had brisk trade with French and Italian ports. But in the long wars which followed the Norman invasion commerce and manufactures almost died out. The first revival occurred in the comparative calm of the early Stuart

reigns. It was in the cattle trade. Irish pastures were rich, Irish industry grew and exported vast numbers of sheep and beeves: and Ireland began to thrive again. This was just what a good government would have encouraged; but it was just what the English government of Ireland prohibited. The prohibition was explicit and direct, by express laws still to be read. There was no concealment about the motives of the prohibition; the laws themselves state that they are for the purpose of injuring Irish trade lest it should interfere with English trade. Accordingly the export of Irish cattle to England was forbidden. It was proposed to make it a felony. One English legislator proposed that it should be considered—adultery!

Forbidden to export cattle to England, the Irish began to export to the colonies. A good colonial trade, especially with America, was growing, when the English Parliament again intervened, and prohibited export of cattle from Ireland to the colonies.

Driven from English trade, driven from colonial trade, the Irish turned to foreign trade.

They were beginning to thrive again when English jealousy again intervened; and the Irish were forbidden to export to foreign countries, or to keep a ship at sea, or even to fish Irish rivers with Irish boats.

Driven from the cattle trade at all sides, Irish industry turned to the woollen trade. This trade seems never to have quite died out. In the seventeenth century it revived. In Dublin, Cork, Waterford, and throughout the South and West, thousands of looms sped merrily, and exports were large and lucrative. But in 1698 and 1699, this industry was deliberately destroyed by statutes of the English Parliament. The Irish were forbidden to export woollens to any country whatever, except to England: and to England only on terms which practically amounted to prohibition.

We may trust Mr. Froude not to exaggerate the case against England; and it is Mr. Froude who tells us that English manufacturers at this time considered it fair and politic to say to Irish manufacturers:—"You shall not weave your wool at home: you shall not sell your woollen cloth either here or abroad: we will put you

under such disadvantages that it shall not be worth your while to supply your own necessities; you shall buy our cloth and frieze to clothe your own backs; you shall sell your fleeces only to us; and as it is our interest to have them on easy terms, you shall take whatever price we are pleased to offer."¹ "The effects of these measures," says Mr. Lecky, "were terrible beyond conception. The main industry of the country was at a blow completely annihilated. A vast population was thrown into destitution. Thousands of manufacturers carried their skill and enterprise to Germany, France, and Spain. . . . Thus by a simple act of authority, at a time when the Irish Parliament was not even sitting, the English Parliament suppressed the chief form of Irish commerce, solely and avowedly because it had succeeded in becoming a formidable competitor to English trade."²

The same policy was pursued with other trades. "Ireland," says Mr. Lecky, "was prohibited by express enactments, or by prohibitory

¹ "The English in Ireland," p. 265.

² "Leaders of Irish Opinion," p. 37.

duties, from exporting either beer or malt to England; from importing hops from any country but England; from exporting glass to any country whatever, and from importing it from any country but England."¹ The only exception made was as to the linen trade, and this exception was made grudgingly, slowly, and imperfectly.

"With their shipping destroyed," says Mr. Froude, "by the Navigation Act, their woollen manufactures taken from them, their trade in all its branches crippled and confined, the single resort left to those of the Irish, who still nourished dreams of improving the unfortunate country, was agriculture."² Hence they began to grow corn extensively. But the growing of corn was impeded. In fact, industry after industry was strangled at its birth, or so shackled as to die of inanition.

Some relaxations had been obtained by Swift and Flood: but such, in the main, was the commercial condition of Ireland when Grattan entered the Irish Parliament, in 1775.

¹ "Leaders of Irish Opinion," p. 41.

² "The English in Ireland," p. 374.

That he freed Irish trade from such trammels was, surely, a service sufficient, of itself, to render any man illustrious in the annals of his country. We may differ about his services in other respects, but about his services to Irish trade there can be no room for difference. In freeing it from trammels so ruinous and so ignoble, Grattan made every man and woman in Ireland then, since, and now, his debtor.

Grattan, however, was not long labouring at the commercial question when he found that it inevitably led him into a larger, an older, and a deeper question, one to which beyond all others the heart of the country vibrated, that of the legislative and administrative independence of Ireland. Whatever may be thought of the present arrangements between Great Britain and Ireland, there can be no reasonable doubt that the arrangements between the two countries, when Grattan took up the task of rectifying them, were very bad indeed. Here were two islands lying side by side, but separated by many miles of stormy sea, identical in some interests, not identical in others, peopled by the same races, but in different proportions,

with different antecedents, and in different conditions of social life. A hundred years ago, one of those islands insisted on ruling the other island with iron despotism. Ireland, indeed, possessed a Parliament of its own: but not all the Lords and Commons of Ireland could pass a law, even about an Irish turnpike gate, without leave expressly asked and expressly given from London. Ireland had not a single representative in the English Parliament: and yet the English Parliament bound Ireland by any laws it liked. This legislative power was, as might be supposed, used ignorantly. It could scarcely be otherwise, in those days when a Yorkshire squire knew far less about Ireland than such a squire now knows about Timbuctoo. But, as we have seen in one instance amongst many, it was used worse than ignorantly—it was used malignantly. Whenever Irish interests clashed, or seemed to clash, with English interests, England remorselessly sacrificed the former to the latter, and laws were passed with the avowed object of prejudicing the entire population of Ireland. Moreover, England not only made laws for Ireland, she sent over English-

men to administer them. As a general rule no Irishman of any rank or creed was allowed to hold high office in Ireland. Lords Lieutenant, Secretaries, Chancellors, Judges, Bishops, were nearly all sent over from England. Some of these were honest and respectable men. Most of them were greedy adventurers. Not a few were utter scamps. Pious and moral divines, said Swift, were appointed in London for Irish sees. They started with their robes and patents. But outside London they were waylaid by highwaymen. The highwaymen murdered them, stole their patents, put on their robes, and were installed bishops in their stead! This saucy sarcasm points to the fact that, badly as England's legislative power over Ireland was used, her administrative power over Ireland was used even worse. The policy of the English administrators, cynically avowed in scores of letters still to be read,¹ was to keep up animosities between different races and religions in Ireland, in order to keep all divided, distracted, and weak. Who knows how many of our

¹ For instance, see "Primate Boulter's Correspondence," p. 172.

subsequent troubles have grown from the seeds thus sown? Another maxim was that Ireland should be kept poor lest she should "wax fat and kick." One day while an Irish gentleman, Sir Hercules Langrishe, was riding in Phoenix Park with a new Lord Lieutenant, his Excellency asked his companion: "Why is it that my predecessors have left this Park so damp and marshy? Why did they not drain it?" "Because," said Langrishe, "your Excellency's predecessors were too much engaged in *draining* the rest of the Kingdom." They did "drain" it in all sorts of ways, except the right way. The Irish pension list was made a sort of appanage of English male and female rascality; and even the Irish peerage was sometimes dishonoured for similar purposes. Of course nothing could thrive under such a system. No country not lost to self-respect could tolerate it. No patriot worthy of the name but should have struggled against it. What was the use of proving that free trade, or free anything was for the advantage of Ireland, while Ireland was ruled by those who did not desire her advantage? Thus it was that Grattan "took

up in grave and noble earnest the great quarrel of Irish Legislative Independence." "Along the banks of that river," he said in after years, speaking of the Liffey as it passed his uncle Tom's place at Marlay Abbey, "amidst the groves and bowers of Swift and Vanessa, I grew convinced that I was right; argument unanswerable came to my mind; a great spirit arose amongst the people; and what I then planned, I afterwards accomplished."

The chief thing, therefore, to be remembered about this second period of Grattan's life [that which commenced with his entering Parliament in 1775, and ended with the Declaration of Rights in 1782], is his extraordinary success. He completely and permanently achieved the commercial freedom of Ireland. He completely and permanently overturned the miserable system under which Ireland had been previously governed. He completely, though not permanently, achieved Irish legislative independence.

How did he accomplish these great things? I shall not attempt to go through the details of his parliamentary campaigns. I shall only

note briefly what appear to have been the elements of his success.

The first and greatest element of Grattan's success was his sincerity. He was "honest to the back-bone." He wanted to do good for Ireland: he wanted nothing more: he wanted nothing less: he wanted nothing else. Then, as now, the generality of men, especially of political men, were playing their own little games, seeking office, or emolument, or popularity, or power, or fame: Grattan was always guilelessly thinking of Ireland. He never took office. He despised wealth. Though dearly loving popularity and fame, he never hesitated to peril them for Ireland. His own interest, fortune, health, or life, seemed to be the last thing he thought of. One of his first legislative triumphs was that of securing the holders of leases for lives renewable from eviction on technical grounds. He carried this reform by a great effort, with a majority of three. When it was all over, people discovered that there was no man in Ireland more interested in the maintenance of the abuse he had abolished than Grattan himself, and that its abolition cost

him over a thousand pounds a-year, at a time when the rest of his income did not exceed three hundred pounds a-year. Thus it was throughout his life. "The character of Grattan," said Lord Russell, "should be drawn with a pencil of light. A purer or more upright statesman never adorned any country." "I never knew a man," said Wilberforce, "whose patriotism and love for his country seemed so completely to extinguish all private interests, and to induce him to look invariably and exclusively to the public good." There was something in Grattan of the quaint, high simplicity which Thackeray delineates in Colonel Newcome. And so, after tricksters, schemers, slanderers, self-seekers, and humbugs of all kinds were forgotten, Ireland took this honest man to her heart of hearts for ever.

Another element of Grattan's success was the charm of his personal character. He was not a saint: far from it. In some respects he was a sad sinner. He was always ready to fight any man in deadly duel—to "blaze," as the phrase went—at an hour's notice. He was

equally ready and relentless in the duel of oratorical invective. These were the ways of the time. Even Grattan knew no better; and this very personal courage and ferocity, so oddly combined with his habitual gentleness, added to his popularity. But there was no false-ness in the man—no dirt to alloy his greatness. What he did he did openly. He never “struck beneath the belt.” He never smiled in a man’s face and slandered him behind his back. He never professed friendship and proved a traitor when friendship came to be tested. He was one of the least rancorous of men, the readiest to forgive, the most just and generous even to enemies. As a friend, he was true, thoughtful, tender. As a companion, he exercised quite a fascination. Men said that Grattan never showed half so great in the hours of his most splendid public triumphs as in the hours of his most unreserved private intercourse. Every one knew that Grattan had nothing to conceal. There were no skeletons in *his* closet. His private life was stainlessly pure; and in an age when bishops drank their dozen bottles, and great statesmen came down to

Westminster more than "half-seas-over," no one ever saw Grattan other than sober. He was, in the best sense of the word, a gentleman.

Another element of Grattan's success is to be found in his intellectual powers and resources. We must not, however, over-estimate these. They were not of the very highest kind. Burke was a far greater thinker; the elder Pitt seems to have been a greater orator. But Grattan combined much of Pitt's oratorical power with much of Burke's philosophical depth.

Moreover, Grattan had made statesmanship his study from boyhood. He had thought out all the great questions of politics. He had at his tongue's tip the political learning of every age. He had the large views which come of large knowledge. He was the first to deal with Irish affairs, not as a party politician, but as a statesman.

The greatest of Grattan's powers, however, was his oratory. This was admittedly fine. We have to take it, as we have to take the oratory of most men of his time, chiefly on

tradition. His reported speeches do not justify his fame. The reporters of that age were sad bunglers, and left us little but tradition to support the fame of Grattan any more than that of Pitt, or Fox, or Mirabeau. Even tradition deals hardly in some respects with Grattan. It tells us that his voice was shrill, his action ungraceful, his manner outrageously odd. O'Connell used to relate that Grattan almost swept the ground with his gestures, and that the motion of his arms was like the rolling of a ship in a heavy sea. Curran used to mimic him, bowing almost to the ground, and thanking Heaven that *he* had no peculiarities of manner. Byron said his delivery was that of a harlequin. Nevertheless, O'Connell, Curran, and Byron concur in representing Grattan as one of the greatest orators that ever lived.

Byron describes him as being :

“With all that Demosthenes wanted endowed,
And his rival or victor in all he possessed.”



And again :

“ With the skill of an Orpheus to soften the brute ;
With the fire of Prometheus to kindle mankind ;
Even Tyranny, listening, sate melted and mute,
And Corruption shrunk, scorched, from the
glance of his mind.”

And Moore :

“ An eloquence rich, wheresoever its wave
Wandered free and triumphant, with thoughts
that shone through
As clear as the book's ‘ stone of lustre ’ that gave,
With the flash of the gem, its solidity too.”

Lord Mahon says that whenever the occasion was greatest then was Grattan greatest. His speeches were not merely graceful compositions, like those of even our best orators at the present day ; they had the elevation, the unity, the symmetry, the splendour of consummate works of art. Each speech had its own clear thesis. This thesis was enforced with keen, hard-headed logic, and illustrated with a stately affluence of illustrations. Thesis, logic, arguments, and illustrations were embodied in a style startling for its terseness, its rapidity, its picturesqueness,

and its brilliancy; a style sparkling with gems of wit that became "mots," and felicities of concentrated wisdom that became proverbs. Over all there reigned a lofty imaginative power which gave it a kind of poetic beauty, a sort of heroic elevation; while every thought, word, argument, and illustration, were animated by an intellectual power and a moral enthusiasm which made a great speech of Grattan's a great political and historical event. No wonder that in after days many a noble soul yearned as Gavan Duffy yearned—

"Oh! to have lived as Grattan lived, in the glow of
his manly years;

To thunder again those iron words, that thrill like
the clash of spears!"

To the clashing of Grattan's arguments there soon answered the clash of arms—the arms of the Volunteers. A hundred thousand men of every rank from the lowliest peasant to the proudest peer, of every creed and political party, rose in loyal defence of their native land, which the exigencies of foreign war had left unprotected, and in no less loyal resolve to assert

its commercial freedom and its legislative independence. The people sympathised from sea to sea. The Parliament rose as one man. The ministry yielded. The English Parliament yielded. Commercial freedom was granted. Legislative freedom was achieved. On the 16th of April, 1782, Ireland's independence was declared. Early on that memorable day, College Green was thronged by thousands from all parts of Ireland. In front of the old Parliament House, and far as the eye could reach, with gleaming arms and glancing banners, and nodding plumes, were the long lines of the Volunteers. Within, Parliament had assembled. Never did that noble dome rise over a more brilliant assembly. In the Gallery were the Peers, with their stars, and orders, and swords; the ladies radiant in varied beauty and attire; the University students in gowns of silk and velvet; the Corporations in their quaint splendour. Every member was in his place, and in full court dress. Many were the cheers for Flood and Yelverton, and Hely Hutchinson, and Philpot Curran. But the moment was too solemn for cheers, every

heart beat, every eye filled, as, with voice tremulous from emotion, but soon rising into his loftiest eloquence, HENRY GRATTAN rose to move the Declaration of Irish Independence. His speech was equal to the occasion: the orator was worthy of the cause. Rarely, if ever, were orator or audience more moved than when Grattan uttered his famous apostrophe:

“I am now to address a free people: ages have passed away, and this is the first moment in which you could be distinguished by that appellation.

“I have spoken on the subject of your liberty so often, that I have nothing to add, and have only to admire by what Heaven-directed steps you have proceeded until the whole faculty of the nation is braced up to the act of her own deliverance.

“I found Ireland on her knees, I watched over her with a paternal solicitude; I have traced her progress from injuries to arms, and from arms to liberty. Spirit of Swift! spirit of Molyneux! your genius has prevailed! Ireland is now a nation! in that new character I hail her! and bowing to her august presence, I say, *Esto perpetua!*”

CHAPTER III.

HIS STRUGGLE FOR CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION AND PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

[1782 TO 1797.]

HENRY GRATTAN was "the man of 1782." This was declared at all sides then. It may be taken to be certain now. Swift growled and witticised: Molyneux pleaded: Lucas toiled and suffered: Flood argued: but Grattan achieved. Before his dauntless courage difficulties vanished. From his enthusiasm the country took heart. His marvellous eloquence gave voice to the voiceless purpose of all. His wisdom guided all to peaceful victory: "a victory," says Lord Brougham, "which stands at the head of all triumphs won by patriots in modern times."

The glory of this great achievement was unstintingly acknowledged at the time of its occur-

rence. The English Premier, Charles James Fox, offered Grattan his choice of offices. Parliament voted him a hundred thousand pounds. The Crown presented him with the vice-regal palace in Phoenix Park. The people of all degrees and every creed hailed him as the National Deliverer. Edmund Burke, then in the meridian of his own fame, declared that "Great Britain and Ireland" ought to "join in wreathing a never-failing garland for the head of Grattan."

About the same time that Grattan thus reached the height of his public fame, he obtained a blessing of far more importance to a man himself than any fame—a good wife. Henrietta Fitzgerald, descended from the old Desmond stock, proved herself a true helpmate, sharing her husband's aspirations, presiding over his hospitalities, tending him in sickness, cheering him in sorrow, encouraging him in all that was noble, gentle, and heroic. They took a charming residence at Tinnehinch, in one of the loveliest of the Wicklow valleys; and there, for nearly forty years, Grattan had a happy home.

Let us now pause; and, looking back through the mists of years, try to get an idea of Grattan's physical appearance. Two good portraits of him are extant. Both were in the National Gallery of the late Dublin Exhibition, and deserved study as well as any in that memorable collection. One is the full length portrait, belonging to the Hall of Trinity College. It represents Grattan attired as Colonel of Volunteers, moving the celebrated Declaration of National Independence. He is "in the pride of his manly years;" small, slight, with dark glancing eye, and delicately-cut features, but so instinct with energy that it gives the idea of commanding presence. The second portrait is even more characteristic. It represents Grattan as an old man: his face "craggy" with the deep lines of many cares; his hair white; his eyes keen and bright; his aspect full of the quaint, exquisite benignity which exercised such a fascination over noble and gentle hearts in both countries.

Happily married—splendidly famous—Grattan returned to public life. He felt that he had only part of his great task done, and he set to work

at the rest with characteristic energy. But almost immediately troubles fell thick on him. Rightly declining office, he somewhat estranged Fox. Rightly refusing the palace in Phoenix Park, he offended the Crown. Rightly declining to receive more than half the Parliamentary Grant, he displeased Parliament. And he soon came to open rupture with the Volunteers themselves, and with his old and illustrious friend, Flood.

The quarrel with the Volunteers was as to their assumption of a dictatorship over the legislature. Grattan knew that there was no tyranny worse than a military dictatorship. Hence, he peremptorily resisted and put down this perilous pretension on the part of the Volunteers. It is now quite clear that he was right; but it was not so clear then to that famous body, flushed with victory and gorgeous in warlike panoply. That the resistance should come from their own chosen spokesman and favourite, was mortifying in the extreme. To Grattan himself the position was full of difficulty and unpleasantness. But seeing what was right with a statesman's insight, he did it with a patriot's

straightforward courage. As usual, while other men were thinking what was good for themselves, and what would please the fancy of the hour, Grattan was thinking what was best for Ireland, and what would most conduce to her true honour and her ultimate peace.

His quarrel with Flood was about the question of "simple repeal." The point was this: By an old act known as Poynings' Act, the Irish Parliament was subjected to English control. Some doubts having arisen as to the construction of this act, the English Parliament, by a Declaratory Act of George I., expressly declared and established such subjection. In 1782, the Irish Parliament declared its independence, and the English Parliament repealed the Declaratory Act on the motion of the Prime Minister, who said he proposed to make "a full, complete, absolute, and perpetual surrender of the British legislative and judicial supremacy over Ireland." Grattan argued that this was enough. Flood maintained that all right of England to legislate over Ireland should be expressly renounced. It was accordingly renounced by Statute, reciting that "doubts had

arisen as to the exclusive rights of the Parliament and Courts of Ireland on matters of legislation and judicature," and enacting that such exclusive right was "ascertained and established for ever," and should be at no time thereafter "questioned or questionable." It seems to me that in this dispute Flood was right and Grattan in error.

Both men were in error, and Grattan notably so, in the hideous scolding match between them, which is to be found in all elocutionary books. I loathe these brilliant passages. It is sad to think of two men, illustrious in genius and in services, old friends and comrades, turning their great powers against each other. Of the two, Grattan was the more to blame. He was the younger man. He owed much to Flood's friendship. He commenced the quarrel. He conducted it with absolute ferocity. Let us turn over the sad page quickly; but as a matter of historical fairness, let us admit that it was a distinct and ineffaceable blot on Grattan's fame. There is reason to believe that in after years he felt it to be so. He wrote and spoke of Flood in terms of generous praise. Flood

also appears to have regretted the contest, and shortly after it joined in some compliments to Grattan. But the two old friends were never reconciled—

“They stood aloof, the scars remaining
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder.”

The decline of Grattan's popularity at this time had, however, another and a nobler cause—his advocacy of Catholic Emancipation. This appears so manifestly right now that it seems hard to understand how it could have made a man unpopular then. But it did. With a few splendid exceptions, the whole current of opinion in both countries ran the other way. Even Swift, Lucas, Charlemont, and Flood himself, were opposed to Catholic Emancipation. Grattan from the first took the larger and nobler view. As Lord Mahon says, “he loved with his whole heart the whole of Ireland—not merely one of its parties or one of its creeds.”¹ Two days before moving the Declaration of Rights, he supported a Bill for the relief of Catholics. “I would be ashamed,” he said, “of giving

¹ Mahon's “History of England,” vol. vii., p. 223.

freedom to six hundred thousand of my fellow-countrymen, if I could not extend it to two millions more." He got a resolution in favour of Catholics passed at the Convention of Dungannon. In his speech on the Declaration of Rights, in February, 1782, he told the Irish House of Commons: "The question of Catholic Emancipation involves the question whether we are to be a Protestant Settlement or an Irish Nation." He wrote to the Volunteers in December, 1782, that so long as the barbarous penal laws continued, there was "a radical weakness in the community." "I conceive it," he said, "a sacred truth that the Irish Protestant will never be really free until the Irish Catholic ceases to be a slave." He felt that Nationality would be a frail edifice indeed—

"So long as Ireland did pretend,
Like sugar-loaf turned upside down,
To stand upon its smaller end—"

And it was even so at this time. With all the talk of civil freedom, four-fifths of the population were still debarred from all franchises, from all professions, from all magistracies, from all juries, from both Houses of

Parliament, and so far as the law could debar them, from holding land, from education, and from worship. There was a special statute against "Papist solicitors," who were statutably declared to be "common disturbers of the peace and tranquillity of his Majesty's subjects in general." It is only within the last hundred years that an Irish Catholic got power to recover money lent on mortgage to an Irish Protestant. Just a hundred years ago a Catholic gentleman of Roscommon got a hint of its being "discovered" that he had an estate. He knew that he should give up either his religion or his lands. He promptly, if not heroically, determined that he would keep the lands. So he galloped to Dublin and conformed. At a banquet given to him on the occasion he was asked for the grounds for his conversion. "Grounds!" he said, "they are good grounds, excellent grounds—two thousand acres of as good grounds as there are in Roscommon!" About the same time Lady O'Donnell defended her change of religion, by the plea that it was better one old woman should be damned, than that the whole House of O'Donnell should be

ruined. Scarcely a century ago the Catholic Bishop of Cork was riding in from a visitation of his diocese. He was stopped near South Gate bridge by a Protestant butcher, who demanded his nag, offering him at the same time five pounds. What was the poor old Bishop to do? The nag was a sorry one enough; but it had borne him well on many a journey. It was certainly worth more than five pounds, and therefore, should be given up to any Protestant who tendered that sum. But the Bishop was equal to the occasion. He turned his bridle into the residence of the Protestant bishop at St. Barry's hard by; I don't know how their lordships settled the theology of the case; but the result was that the Protestant bishop bought the horse for five pounds; the greedy butcher was sent off growling, the Catholic bishop got five pounds, his dinner and claret "galore," and thenceforward he rode in peace round his diocese on the horse which thus legally belonged to his Protestant rival. This episcopal "dodge" was adopted in larger matters; and some Catholic gentlemen preserved their properties by their being kept in trust for them

with chivalrous honour by some Protestant friends. Relaxations of this kind were frequent. The people were nobler and gentler than their laws. But the laws were shamefully, inexcusably, diabolically bad, as "well fitted," says Burke, "for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man." It was against this system that Grattan set himself with all his might, with all his enthusiasm, with all his genius. Month after month, year after year, in Parliament and out of it, he assailed this system. His speeches were, by universal testimony, of splendid power. Only imperfect scraps of them have come down to us. Here is one:—

"The part of the subject which I shall now press upon you is the final and eternal doom to which some gentlemen propose to condemn the Catholic. Some have said they must never get the elective franchise. What! never be free? Three millions of your people condemned by their fellow-subjects to an everlasting slavery, in all changes of time and increase of knowledge. . . . Never

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be free! Do you mean to tell the Roman Catholic, It is in vain you take oaths and declarations of allegiance, . . . it will make no difference as to your emancipation. Go to France—go to America—carry your property, industry, manufactures, and family, to a land of liberty. This is a sentence which requires the power of a God and the malignity of a demon. You are not competent to pronounce it; believe me you may as well plant your foot on the earth, and hope by that resistance to stop the diurnal revolution which advances you to that morning sun which is to shine alike on the Protestant and the Catholic, as you can hope to arrest the progress of that other light—reason and justice—which approach to liberate the Catholic and to liberalize the Protestant. Even now the question is on its way, and making its destined and irresistible progress—a progress which you, with all your authority, will have no power to resist, no more than any other great truth, or any great ordinance of nature, or any law of nations, which mankind is free to contemplate, but cannot resist.”

Grattan's efforts succeeded to a large extent. As the spirit of nationality strengthened, the spirit of sectarianism declined. Curran, Plunket, Ponsonby, and Burrowes, gave Grattan steady and able help: and thus, de-

spite the persistent resistance of the English interest, Irish Protestants admitted their fellow-subjects, by successive enactments, to freedom of worship, to tenure of land, to the jury box, to the professions, to the franchise, and to the magistracy. The great Relief Bill of 1793 was carried by Grattan with the enthusiastic support of several Protestant bishops and the majority of the Protestant clergy. It seems also quite clear that the Irish Protestants at this time were willing to admit Irish Catholics to full participation in civil liberty. In 1794, Grattan prepared a bill for their complete emancipation. It was drawn up by him, in concert with the Lord Lieutenant and the Cabinet. When it was brought into the House of Commons, there were but three dissentients in the whole house. The Bill certainly would have passed, had no external influence intervened. The Viceroy reported that "Catholic Emancipation was ardently desired by Roman Catholics, asked for by very many Protestants, and cheerfully acquiesced in by nearly all." But the Viceroy was suddenly and peremptorily recalled to

England; the Bill had to be withdrawn; the Parliament, which, with all its faults, was so ready to pass this great measure of justice, was itself soon afterwards extinguished: and Catholic Emancipation was deferred for a generation.

Another great question of the time was that of the Regency. George III., whose intellect was always more or less imperfect, went mad outright in 1789. Pitt proposed an arrangement which would have virtually vested the royal power in himself. Grattan proposed and carried, in the Irish Parliament, the more constitutional arrangement of making the Prince of Wales Regent. The controversy was at its height when the King recovered. While it was going on the Prince (afterwards George IV.) made all sorts of protestations of gratitude to the Irish leaders. "Tell Grattan," he said to Mr. Pelham, "that I am a most determined Irishman." When Grattan went over he talked of his heart, and swore eternal friendship. Grattan's guileless nature was no match for that royal rascal. Thackeray, in one of his lectures on the Georges, implies wonder that

Grattan should have wasted on the Prince or his associates any of his "wondrous eloquence, fancy, feeling." Grattan himself naively and characteristically lets out the reason in a letter to his friend Brougham: "I thought," he wrote, "I could make the Prince a friend to Ireland." Others knew "the first gentleman in Europe" better. "If that man ever comes to the throne," said Lord Moira, "he will deceive his friends." "I am sure," said Thomas Moore, "that the powder on his Royal Highness' hair is more settled than anything in his Royal Highness' head or in his Royal Highness' heart." And so it was. He used his friends, and then he threw them over. When he got into power, he became one of the worst enemies of Ireland, notwithstanding Moore's witty reminders:

"You told us this; you told us that—

Oh! wirra strue. Oh! wirra strue!

How long you'd be a friend to Pat—

Oh! wirra strue. Oh! wirra strue!

And Oh! you told us not to fret,

And said you'd make us happy yet.

Remember that you don't forget—

Oh! wirra, wirra, wirra strue!"

Another great question to which Grattan devoted himself was that of Parliamentary Reform. Whatever were the faults of the Irish Parliament of 1782, it had some great merits. It helped to achieve legislative independence. It freed the country from commercial restrictions. It partially effected Catholic Emancipation. It was ready to complete it. It vigilantly watched and promoted the material interests of the country, improved navigation, opened canals, developed fisheries, established tontines, and in ten years trebled the exports of Ireland. In Lord Plunket's great speech of January, 1800, he thus describes the progress of Ireland under this Parliament:—"Irish revenues, trade, and manufactures prospered under it beyond the example of any other country of equal extent. Within these few years Ireland advanced with a rapidity astonishing even to herself." Lord Plunket's antagonist, Lord Clare, admitted that there was not "a nation in the habitable globe which had advanced in cultivation and commerce, in agriculture and manufactures, with the same rapidity in the same time." Nor was this progress only material—it was

intellectual also. We may say of Grattan, as the "Spectator" recently said in another connexion:—"The man who founds a nation with its distinctive life, and special aim, and separate development, does more to make that nation great and happy, than he who effects any material improvements whatever." At this time the heart and brain of the whole community began to pulsate with national life, and to throb with aspirations after excellence in all departments. Dublin became one of the most brilliant capitals in Europe; its society amongst the most graceful, witty, and refined. A taste for Art arose. Fine public buildings were erected. Painting and Sculpture were successfully cultivated. You still find in nearly every old Dublin house, traces of carvings worthy of the best Italian art. Trinity College became a really notable seat of learning. "It was a period," says Hallam, "fruitful of splendid eloquence." Parliament had a dozen men any of whom would have won honour and distinction in any assembly of Europe. Where, before or since, will you find such a group of Irishmen as Anthony Malone, John Perry, Hussey Burgh,

John Forster, Barry Yelverton, Hely Hutchinson, Denis Daly, Charles Kendal Bushe, Philpot Curran, William Plunket, Henry Flood, and Henry Grattan? Nor was this intellectual stir confined to Parliament or to the metropolis. Every provincial city had its groups of intellectual notables, and all social intercourse benefited by the example of men who strove to express themselves with accuracy and eloquence, and who brought to the discussions of politics every aid that culture and refinement could bestow.

But in this bright picture there were deep shadows. Hard drinking prevailed terribly. Dinner parties were too often scenes of shameful drunkenness. Fathers used to exhort their sons: "Boys, if you want to get on in the world, make your heads while you are young." "Drunk as a lord," became a proverb. Judges were sometimes tipsy on the Bench. Curran said of one: "If he does not exactly weep in passing sentence, he very often has a drop in his eye." A French traveller tells that having asked a Mayo gentleman to join him at luncheon, the Mayo gentleman asked for punch: punch being

produced, he drank twelve tumblers: then he gracefully bowed himself off, asking to be excused from taking more, because having to dine with the Parish priest, he would not like to have the slightest appearance of liquor. Duelling had also grown into a fearful abuse. It prevailed in nearly all ranks and reached even the Bar, the Bench, and the Senate. "Does he blaze?" used to be the question preliminary to a man's admission to some Clubs. Until a man had "smelt powder," he was scarcely considered a gentleman in some Clubs. There were two leaders of fashion in Dublin, one of whom had shot his friend named Kelly, and the other had shot his coachman. They were playfully called "Kilkelly" and "Kilcoachee." Bagenal Harvey, in his old age, sent a courteous apology to his antagonist for not being able to fight him before the afternoon, "Time was," he said, "when I used to rise before day-break to fight at sun-rise, but we cannot do these things at seventy-eight." He piously added, "Heaven's will be done!" One morning at an early hour, Curran was found getting his hair dressed. "How is this?" said a friend, "I

am dressing for the Provost's Ball," answered Curran; the fact being that he was going to meet the Provost of Trinity College in mortal combat at Phoenix Park. Sir Jonah Barrington gives a long list of barristers and judges who, like Toler, "shot up" to preferment. At one election in the county of Cork, Mr. Egan, a distinguished barrister, fought fourteen duels. Another excused himself for not fighting on the ground that he had not got the fighting fee. In Parliament, after almost every keen debate, there was, at least, one adjournment to "the fifteen acres." As we have seen, Grattan was no exception to this brutal code: but even in this sad connexion a trait of his gentleness is told. He had a famous duel with Corry, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Shortly afterwards a friend, calling at Corry's house, found Corry lying sick and wounded in a dark room. "Hush!" said Corry, "speak low, Henry [meaning Grattan] is asleep, he never left me since it happened, and the poor fellow is worn out with watching." Nor was all eloquence and brilliancy in Parliamentary debate. Much of the speaking was

poor stuff enough. There was a liberal sprinkling of "bulls" to garnish most debates. We Cork folk, who somehow always have a "character" on hands, sent up for a while one famous Sir Vivian Peek, whose very name used to set our fathers in "roars." "As I write these words," said Sir Vivian, in a report to the Castle, "I hold a drawn sword in one hand and a cocked pistol in the other." But Sir Boyle Roche, Chamberlain of the Castle, was "the fun of the House." It was he who uttered the memorable aphorism :—"Single misfortunes never come alone: the greatest of all possible misfortunes is generally accompanied by one infinitely greater." In advocating the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, he used his famous argument: "Sir, it is better to give up a part, nay, it is better to give up the whole of the Constitution, in order to preserve the remainder;" and, again addressing the Speaker on the dangers of democracy, he warned him: "A time may come, Sir, when you will walk down to this house to find your own head, Sir, flung on that table, staring you in the face." But, as Grattan deeply felt, there underlay

nearly all the anomalies and defects of Irish life the anomalous and defective character of the House of Commons itself. In theory it represented the whole community: in reality (Catholics being excluded from it), it represented only one-fifth of the community. Even as a representation of this fifth, it was utterly defective. More than one-third of its members were nominees for close boroughs, bound to vote whichever way their patrons bid them. Thus the Duke of Leinster commanded seven votes, the Ponsonbys fourteen, Lord Shannon sixteen, the Crown forty. Country gentlemen who commanded two or three votes, bought up more, disposed of the votes as the Minister of the day directed, and got to be made Peers: thus carrying corruption into both branches of the legislature.

It was for the reform of this system that Grattan strove. It was precisely this system the British ministers were determined to uphold, extend, and make use of. Reform of Parliament! That was the very last thing Pitt would allow. On the contrary, it is beyond all doubt that at the time he sent over Castlereagh with

distinct instructions so to corrupt and degrade the legislature, in order to bring about its extinction. "The ministry," said Grattan, "founded its authority on moral depravity, and formed a league and covenant with an oligarchy, to transfer for hire, virtually and substantially, the power of legislation to the Cabinet of another kingdom." "It is," says Mr. Lecky, "a simple and unexaggerated statement of the fact, that, in the entire history of representative government there is no instance of corruption having been applied on so large a scale, and with such audacious effrontery." "My occupation," wrote Lord Cornwallis, the Lord Lieutenant of the time, "is negotiating and jobbing. How I hate myself every hour from being engaged in this dirty work! how I long to kick those I am obliged to court!"¹ The Union was ultimately carried even in a legislature so exposed to corruption by a majority of only 162 out of 300 Members. Lord Cornwallis wrote that he believed half of this majority would be as much delighted as their opponents if the measure were defeated. Of this 162, no fewer than 116 were

¹ "Cornwallis's Correspondence," vol. iii.

placemen; and amongst them, a few who were induced to absent themselves, and the subservient peers, Castlereagh distributed in corruption twenty peerages, twenty advances of rank in the peerage, seven judgeships, over two hundred salaried places, and over two millions of pounds sterling, in "ready money, cash down."

While this work of corruption was proceeding, another horror was added—that of civil war. To insurrection Grattan was no less opposed than to corruption. The boldest champion of liberty, he was, at the same time, the firmest friend of order. An advocate of Irish legislative independence, he was no less an advocate of natural and healthy alliance with England, and cordial co-operation for every common end. "Next to the liberty of my country," he often said, "I am anxious not to accustom the Irish mind to an alien and suspicious habit towards England." Moreover, to this particular insurrection he was opposed on special grounds. He believed that it was deliberately provoked and encouraged by the English ministry, in order to bring about the Union,

and he deemed its leaders dupes of the ministers and involuntary co-operators in the destruction of the very liberties they were risking fortune and life to achieve. We cannot pause here to discuss whether Grattan was right or wrong in this view. It is enough to state it *was* his view; that he had the best opportunities of judging; that he was incapable of intentional misrepresentation; and that of his chivalrous personal courage no one, friend or enemy, ever doubted.

In face of this combination of corruption and insurrection, both promoted, as Grattan believed, not by the people or the legislature, but by the unscrupulous agents of foreign domination, Grattan and some of his friends withdrew from Parliament. With his usual frankness he told the reason. "The reason we seceded was, that we did not approve of the conduct of the united men, and we could not approve of the conduct of the Government. We were afraid of encouraging the former by making speeches against the latter; and we thought it better in such a case, as we could support neither, to withdraw from both." It was, no doubt, an additional reason that about this time his health

again almost utterly broke down. His spirits sunk. His nerves became shattered. He retired to Castle-Connell on the Shannon, then to the Isle of Wight, ultimately to his home in Wicklow. Thus, in sorrow and sickness closed the third period of Grattan's career, and the last days of the last century in Ireland.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS STRUGGLE AGAINST THE UNION.

[1800.]

THE 15th day of January, 1800, was one of the most anxious days Dublin ever saw. It was the day of the opening of the last Session of the Irish Parliament, and of the commencement of the great debate on the Union.

In the preceding Session, the Government Bill for the Union had been defeated, and Dublin, Cork, and most Irish cities had been illuminated. The popular majority, however, was only five. Meantime the Government made immense exertions. Cornwallis promised at all sides; Castlereagh offered gold, pensions, and peerages with both hands. A pistolling club was formed in Castlereagh's house to shoot down those who could not be bribed. Aston-

ishing changes of opinion, wonderful achievements of corruption, were rumoured.

Nevertheless the popular leaders held high heads, and had high hopes. The honesty, sense, spirit, wit, worth, education, disciplined intellect, and genius of the country, were with them; so was the popular feeling everywhere. Though the Government spent immense sums on getting up petitions in favour of the Union, and took the very prisoners out of gaols to sign them, they could get only seven thousand such signatures. More than seven hundred thousand citizens voluntarily petitioned against it.

After a day of feverish anxiety, as the chill wintry clouds closed in, and the Members were assembling, College-green became covered with a sea of upturned faces, lit by the flickering of a thousand torches—by the flashing of a thousand emotions. Many were the comments, grave and gay, of praise and scorn:—“Come, Mr. M —, you were paid this morning; give us a tenpenny bit to drink your health.” “Success to you, my Lord E —. It was you made the good bargain, and it’s a

credit to us all: you did not sell your country too cheap." "Three cheers for Sir William, boys; he bargained to be a Lord when there's to be no Lords at all." "Here's Harry D—— G——, boys. How much did they mark on your brief, Harry?" Castlereagh was almost shielded from popular scorn by the superb beauty of his wife; but when Lord Clare appeared, many a fist was clenched, and groans reverberated like muffled thunder. The groans were changed to cheers, wild, loud, and high, as Plunket reared his noble front, and glorious little Curran flashed his dark eyes, and Kendal Bushe, and Saurin, and Gould, brought the greatest names at the Bar of Ireland. But there were sad gaps in the popular ranks. Lucas had long since passed away. Flood's tall form was mouldering in the grave. Charlemont's princely presence would never again meet mortal eye. And the greatest of them all—first in genius, first in services, first in the heart of Ireland—HENRY GRATTAN, was not even entitled to enter the House of which he was the pride. He was believed to be lying on his death-bed in Wicklow. Some wild ru-

mour had, indeed, ran, that he had been on that very day returned Member for Wicklow, and that, before the debate was over, he would appear to save, if man could save, the liberties of his country. But this rumour was deemed too wild to be seriously believed.

Inside the House all was tenfold excitement. The students of Trinity College held their accustomed places, serried rank on rank in young enthusiasm. The galleries were thronged with the beauty and fashion of a capital where beauty and fashion were famous; and the ladies themselves showed by the colours they wore that they were not only spectators but partizans. Behind these rose many a row of eager faces, and many a form on which shone the stars of the Peerages of both islands. The Members thronged the House below in the splendid full dress of the time.

At first, the ministry did not show their hands. The Viceregal speech from the throne made no mention of the one subject which was on all lips. The mover and seconder of the address were equally reticent. But Sir Laurence Parsons forced the ministerial hand.

In a stirring speech he moved an amendment declaratory of the resolution of Parliament to support the independence of the nation. Then came the debate. "Every man," says Barrington, "seemed on that night inspired by his subject." Gentle George Ponsonby astounded friends and foes by display of intense power and passion. Even Castlereagh was eloquent. Bushe and Plunket made speeches which have become historical. The gray morning began to dawn, and the debate to languish, when a great sound of popular tumult was heard from outside: the debate stopped: cheer rung above cheer, until all Dublin seemed to be cheering. George Ponsonby and Arthur Moore (afterwards Judge) glided out. They soon reappeared, supporting a man in the uniform of the Volunteers, but wasted by illness, pale with suffering, white as a ghost. It was HENRY GRATTAN. It was indeed he. Government had kept back the writ for Wicklow until the very day on which Parliament had met. But that very day it had been sped by willing hands to Wicklow; the voters were ready; the return was made after midnight: Grattan sprung from his bed; his wife

parted him believing they would never meet again; fleet horses bore his carriage fast: and he was there: there to fight his last battle for the land he loved. As he entered, the whole House rose and uncovered. As he tottered to the table and took the oaths, Lord Castlereagh and all the Ministers bowed low and remained standing. For awhile no sound broke the silence, except the sounds of convulsive sobs from the galleries. But as the grand old tribune rose to address the House, there burst forth a long wild cheer that answered well the cheer without, and was well re-answered back again. Scarcely, however, had he risen when he fell back again into his seat exhausted. Then he asked leave to address the House without rising. "And then," says Mr. Lecky, "was witnessed that spectacle, amongst the grandest in the whole range of the mental phenomena, of mind asserting its supremacy over matter, of the power of enthusiasm, and the power of genius nerving a feeble and emaciated frame. As the fire of oratory kindled, as the angel of enthusiasm touched those pallid lips with the living coal, as the old scenes

crowded on the speaker's mind, and the old plaudits broke on his ear, it seemed as though the force of disease was neutralized, and the buoyancy of youth restored. His voice gained a deeper power, his action a more commanding energy, his eloquence an ever-increasing brilliancy. For more than two hours he poured forth a stream of epigram, of argument, and of appeal. He traversed almost the whole of that complex question: he grappled with the various arguments of expediency the Ministers had urged; but he placed the issue on the highest grounds; 'the thing (he said) the ministry proposes to buy is what cannot be sold—liberty.' When he at last concluded, it must have been felt, that if the Irish Parliament could have been saved by eloquence, it would have been saved by Henry Grattan." But it could not be so saved, and the vote was adverse.

The debate was adjourned, and continued at intervals during several weeks, the popular party hoping against hope, and contending against desperate odds. Grattan made a series of his most brilliant efforts. The whole nature

of the man was aroused. He shook off illness. He seemed to have grown young. He put forth all his resources. As usual, the reports of these addresses are obviously imperfect; but despite all imperfections, their surpassing force and beauty appear. What can be finer in its way than this apparently improvised answer to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Corry, who had accused him of inciting to rebellion?

“Has the gentleman done? Has he completely done? He was unparliamentary from the beginning to the end of his speech. There was scarce a word he uttered that was not a violation of the privileges of the House; but I did not call him to order—Why? Because the limited talents of some men render it impossible for them to be severe without being unparliamentary. But before I sit down, I shall show him how to be severe and parliamentary at the same time. On any other occasion I should think myself justifiable in treating with silent contempt anything that might fall from that honourable Member; but there are times when the insignificance of the accuser is lost in the magnitude of the accusation. I know the difficulty the honourable gentleman laboured under when he attacked

me, conscious that, on a comparative view of our characters, public and private, there is nothing he could say which would injure me. The public would not believe the charge. I despise the falsehood. If such a charge were made by an honest man, I would answer it in the manner I shall do before I sit down. But I shall first reply to it when not made by an honest man.

“The right honourable gentleman says I fled from the country after exciting rebellion, and that I have returned to raise another. No such thing. The charge is false. The civil war had not commenced when I left the kingdom; and I could not have returned without taking a part. On the one side there was the camp of the rebel; on the other, the camp of the Minister, a greater traitor than that rebel. The stronghold of the Constitution was nowhere to be found. I agree that the rebel who rises against the Government should have suffered; but I missed on the scaffold the right honourable gentleman. Two desperate parties were in arms against the Constitution. The right honourable gentleman belonged to one of those parties, and deserved death. I could not join the rebel—I could not join the Government—I could not join torture—I could not join half-hanging—I could not join free quarter—I could take part with neither. I was therefore absent from a scene where I could not be

active without self-reproach, nor indifferent with safety.

“Many honourable gentlemen thought differently from me: I respect their opinions, but I keep my own; and I think now, as I thought then, that the treason of the Minister against the liberties of the people was infinitely worse than the rebellion of the people against the Minister.

“I have returned, not as the right honourable Member has said, to raise another storm—I have returned to discharge an honourable debt of gratitude to my country, that conferred a great reward for past services, which, I am proud to say, was not greater than my desert. I have returned to protect that Constitution, of which I was the parent and the founder, from the assassination of such men as the honourable gentleman and his unworthy associates. They are corrupt—they are seditious—and they, at this very moment, are in a conspiracy against their country. I have returned to refute a libel, as false as it is malicious, given to the public under the appellation of a Report of the Committee of the Lords. Here I stand ready for impeachment or trial: I dare accusation. I defy the honourable gentleman; I defy the Government; I defy their whole phalanx: let them come forth. I tell the Ministers I will neither give them quarter nor take it. I am here to lay the shattered remains of my

constitution on the floor of this House in defence of the liberties of my country."

However, the end came at last, and with it these last words of Grattan on the Irish Parliament:—

"The Constitution may be for a time so lost; the character of the country cannot be lost. The Ministers of the Crown will find that it is not so easy to put down for ever an ancient and respectable nation; by abilities, however great, and by power and by corruption, however irresistible. Liberty may repair her golden beams, and with redoubled heat animate the country. The cry of loyalty will not long continue, against the principles of liberty. Loyalty is a noble, a judicious, and a capacious principle: but in these countries loyalty, distinct from liberty, is corruption, not loyalty.

"The cry of the connexion will not, in the end, avail against the principles of liberty. Connexion is a wise and a profound policy; but connexion without an Irish Parliament is connexion without its own principle, without analogy of condition, without the pride of honour that should attend it; is innovation, is peril, is subjugation—not connexion.

"The cry of disaffection will not, in the end, avail against the principles of liberty.

“Identification is a solid and imperial maxim, necessary for the preservation of freedom, necessary for that of empire; but, without union of hearts—with a separate government, and without a separate parliament—identification is extinction, is dishonour, is conquest—not identification.

“Yet I do not give up the country. I see her in a swoon, but she is not dead. Though in her tomb she lies, helpless and motionless, there is on her lips a spirit of life, and on her cheek a glow of beauty—

‘Thou art not conquered ; beauty’s ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
And death’s pale flag is not advanced there.’

While a plank of the vessel sticks together, I will not leave her. Let the courtier present his flimsy sail, and carry the light bark of his faith with every new breath of wind : I will remain anchored here with fidelity to the fortunes of my country, faithful to her freedom, faithful to her fall.”

CHAPTER V.

HIS LAST YEARS AND DEATH.

[1800 TO 1820.]

WITH the fall of the Irish Parliament all that was historically characteristic in Grattan's career ended. He retired into private life for some years. In Carr's "Stranger in Ireland" there is a pleasant glimpse of him in his Wicklow home. "I had," says the writer, "the peculiar happiness of seeing this great man in the bosom of his family; and finding in one of the greatest orators of the age an affectionate husband, a fond father, a hospitable gentleman." Thus, too, Moore pictures him in one of the "Melodies :"

"Who that ever approached him, when, free from
the crowd,

In a home full of love, he delighted to tread
'Mong the trees which a nation had given, and
which bow'd,

As if each brought a new civic crown for his
head.
That home, where—like him who, as fable hath
told,
Put the rays from his brow that his child might
come near—
Ev'ry glory forgot, the most wise of the old,
Became all that the simplest and youngest hold
dear."

In 1805 he was induced to enter the Imperial Parliament. He took his seat on a back bench. But Charles Fox said, "That is no place for the Irish Demosthenes;" and he drew his friend to his own bench. There was much doubt as to whether Grattan, at his advanced years, and with his peculiarities, would succeed in the British Parliament. But such doubts were ended by his very first address. The "Annual Register" of the day declared it "one of the most brilliant speeches ever heard within the walls of Parliament." Pitt vied with Fox in acclamation and congratulation. Byron, Rogers, Campbell, and the chief literary notables of the time who had assembled in the gallery to hear it, were enthusiastic in their admiration. It was in this speech Grattan said

of the Irish Parliament, "I sat by its cradle ; I followed its hearse."

In 1806, Fox becoming Premier, Grattan was asked to take office : but he declined. About the same time he refused £4000 which the Catholics of Dublin had subscribed to defray the expenses of his election for that city. He could never speak of the Union without indignation. Believing, however, that its repeal was hopeless until Catholic Emancipation was achieved, he devoted his remaining years to the latter object, rarely addressing the House on any other subject, and working for it with unflagging energy. In the course of these labours he had some strange alternations of success and failure, of popular enthusiasm, and even one sad sudden instance of popular disfavour. But all that was good and generous at any side of Irish life honoured the grand old tribune. Even in the Imperial Parliament he was treated with exceptional respect. Lord Mahon tells us, on the authority of the late Sir Robert Peel, that such of the Members who had sat with him in the Irish House of Commons were accustomed to address him with a "Sir," as they would

address the Speaker or a Royal Duke. In 1819 he almost carried Catholic Emancipation, the majority against him being only two. In 1820, while seriously ill, he went to London, contrary to the advice of his physicians and the entreaties of his friends, to renew the motion. But the hand of death was upon him. It had nearly happened to him as it happened to Lord Chatham—to sink in his death-sickness while addressing the House. He lingered for a few days. As he lay on his deathbed he spoke tenderly of Flood. He said to Lord Cloncurry, “Keep knocking at the Union.” He received the last religious rites calmly. He died on the 6th of June, 1820. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, near where Pitt and Fox were afterwards laid.

Such was the career of Grattan. Of the four great objects of his life, three—Free Trade, Parliamentary Reform, and Catholic Emancipation—are now the law of the land. The fourth—the legislative Independence of Ireland, is again a question of present politics. However good men may differ about it, all may agree in their estimate of Grattan himself. He

was not without serious faults. He committed some not inconsiderable errors. But he devoted his long life and every faculty of his fine intellect to a sincere, unselfish effort to serve Ireland. As Lord Mahon said, "he loved with all his heart the whole of Ireland, not merely one of its parties or one of its creeds." He rendered to all solid, splendid, and permanent services. He gave all the example of a career of stainless purity. He dignified and ennobled the public life not only of Ireland, but of the world. Guizot revered him. Montalembert was inspired by his oratory, and intended to have written his life. Calhoun loved to quote him. Owing to the generous initiative of one distinguished citizen of Dublin, and the cordial co-operation of many others, Dublin has obtained a fine public statue of him. Other cities may soon follow this example. But, however that may be, I trust that this quaint, gentle, heroic figure may long live in the hearts of Irishmen, teaching mutual forbearance, large-hearted tolerance, wise co-operation for common purposes, and unselfish love of the land of which all are sons.

THE END.



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